**Get the GIST**

**Descriptor:**  This is a summarizing strategy that requires the students to pare down the information that they have talked about or read into 10 words or less (or more with older students). The process assists students in better comprehension of content materials. It is a very versatile strategy that can be used with both expository and narrative text and is an effective tool to use in the content areas.

The key questions that the students are asked to consider are:

1. Who or what is the paragraph mostly about?
2. What is the most important thing about the “who” or “what”?
3. Put together the answers and tell the main idea in 10 (20) words or less.

There are different methods of creating a **“GIST”** Summary with your students:

**Option #1:**

Steps:

1. Distribute a short piece of text that is divided into four or five sections. Sections should mark logical summarizing spots. The end of each section should be identified with the word **STOP**.
2. Explain the **GIST** format—Read a portion of the text, stop, write a summarizing statement for each portion so that at the end of the reading, students should have a concise summary.
3. Introduce the text by connecting with students’ prior knowledge. Identify key vocabulary words.
4. Read aloud the first passage.
5. Lead class discussion and make note of key ideas.
6. Craft a **GIST** statement. Students write the sentence in notebooks or journals.
7. Read aloud the remaining passages and complete the above sequence for each section.
8. Combine the **GIST** statements into a concise summary of the material.

**Option #2:**

This format combines the Journalists’ Questions with the 20-word GIST. Before asking students to create their own GIST Summaries, model the process detailed below.

Steps:

1. Select content-related newspaper articles for students to read. Allow students to work in pairs as they learn the strategy.
2. Students read the article and identify the 5 Ws and an H on the GIST template.
3. Using the 5 Ws and an H as a reference, students write 20-word summaries (GISTs
4. Once students have mastered writing a **GIST** using articles, the strategy is then applied to content area texts to support comprehension and summarizing skills.

**Example: A Great Wind**

**Hurricanes are the strongest of the windy storms. These are some of the most frightening, destructive storms on Earth. They form over warm ocean waters. Just like smoke is sucked up a chimney, hurricanes draw warm, moist air off the sea and start spinning around a calm centre called an eye. The more air they suck up, the faster they spin and the more furious they become. While the eye of the hurricane can be calm and clear, the eye wall around it is the most violent part.**

1. Who or what is the paragraph mostly about? **The paragraph is about hurricanes.**
2. What is the most important thing about the “who” or “what”? **The most important thing is that as hurricanes are very dangerous because the more warm moist air they suck up the faster they spin.**
3. Put together the answers and tell the main idea in 10 words or less. **Hurricanes suck up warm moist air and spin dangerously fast.**

**Adaptation for Age levels**

With younger students you would work with shorter texts and focus on the three questions from above:

1. Who or what is the paragraph mostly about?
2. What is the most important thing about the “who” or “what”?
3. Put together the answers and tell the main idea in 10 words or less.

Once the reading and summarizing abilities of the students increases, you could move into longer texts, both narrative and expository, using any of the methods outlined above. Older students and/more complex texts would require the students to write a 20 word or less **GIST.**

Also, with grade 4 and above, one concept would be considered to be one word (e.g. Reverend Martin Luther King is one word) in the **GIST.**

**For EAL students,** you will have to provide lots of modeling of the strategy and lots of practice with finding the answers to the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?Lots of discussion as you are working together to form the **GIST** will help to increase vocabulary and understanding of concepts/language usage.

GIST Template

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Article Title/Story Title** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Article Source/Author** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**1. Read the article/story.**

**2. Fill out the 5Ws and H.**

Who:

What:

Where:

When:

Why:

How:

**3. Write a 20-word GIST**

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